ISSUE CAMPAIGNS

ORGANIZING TO SOLVE PROBLEMS YOUR COLLEAGUES CARE ABOUT
AGENDA

• What is an “Issue Campaign”?
• Identifying an Organizing Issue
• Decision Makers
• Strategic Escalation & Tactics
• Summary
ISSUE CAMPAIGNS

THE WHAT AND WHY
A **sustained effort** by members of the chapter to win a **specific improvement** in the lives of faculty by applying pressure through **direct actions over time** against a **decision maker** who is empowered to give you the improvement but would **otherwise refuse**.
Building Power and Issue Campaigns have **two dimensions**:

**External:** Wielding power to leverage over a decision maker to get what you want

**Internal:** Growing your chapter and developing a culture of organizing

**BOTH** are important, and everything we talk about today connects to these.
WHY ISSUE CAMPAIGNS?

• Advocacy chapters do not have access to labor rights, must rely on collective action to solve problems.

• One-off, reactive, and unfocused actions won’t change the status-quo.

• Campaigns build the chapter beyond the core leadership.

• Administration will take you seriously.
To change the status quo, we must make decision makers uncomfortable with their decisions.
IDENTIFYING AN ORGANIZING ISSUE

NEVER MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ORGANIZE
CHOOSING AN ISSUE

Organizer’s vocabulary:

**Problem**: Something causing the faculty to suffer.
(i.e., stagnating faculty salaries, enfeebled senate, declining tenure-track positions, corporate board, etc.)

**Issue**: A solution to the problem.
(i.e., faculty salary increases, structural governance changes, increased tenure track appointments, transparency on the board, etc.)
An issue is *not* something we can simply do ourselves. It must be something that can be won from some person or persons who would otherwise not give it to us.
SPECIFIC WAYS TO IDENTIFY AN ISSUE

• One-on-One organizing Conversations
• Faculty wide survey
• Chapter hosted townhalls
• The issue chooses you (sometimes)

Or a combination of these!
CRITERIA FOR A GOOD ORGANIZING ISSUE

Will the issue:
- be widely felt?
- be deeply felt?
- have a clear decision maker?
- result in real improvement in faculty’s lives?
- make people aware of their own organized power?
- require expanding your chapter?
- alter the relations of power?
- be winnable?

- have a clear timeline that works for you?
- be non-divisive?
- build leadership?
- set up your chapter for the next campaign?
- be consistent with your values and mission?
- be easy to understand?
ISSUE IDENTIFICATION AND MEMBERSHIP

• Issue identification is an **opportunity to build membership.**
• The issue should **not be dictated**, otherwise we are missing the opportunity to **engage with and recruit members.**
• Ultimately a **small organizing group** will need to settle on issue.
• But **consultation and listening** must come first.
DECISION MAKERS

WHO CAN GIVE US WHAT WE WANT?
WHO CAN GIVE US THE SOLUTION?

• There is a **person, or small group**, who could give us the solution to our problem if they wanted.

• Our job is to **apply sufficient pressure** through the chapter so that they give us what we want.

• This person is thus the **“target”** of our campaign

• We pressure this person through **strategic direct actions**, or **“tactics”** in the language of organizing, that escalate in intensity over time.
CHOOSING A TARGET

• Target needs to be a person(s) with a name(s).
• This person(s) holds the power to decide to give us what we want.
• They are influenced by other people, and we should pressure them as well.
• Do a simple “power map” of the target to determine points of leverage.
CHOOSING A TARGET

The **issue determines who our target is**! Thus, we must identify issue first.

Some common targets in higher ed:

• University President
• Chair of the Board of Trustees
• Provost
• A specific legislator, or a legislative committee
• Governor
PRESSURING THE TARGET BEYOND THE CHAPTER

• In addition to direct actions (“tactics”—more on this later) we can engage with those who hold influence over the decision maker.

• Some possible external leverage points:
  • Are there faculty-friendly members of the Board?
  • Are there high-profile alumni/donors we can contact?
  • Community allies, including religious groups, business community, allied organizations, etc.
  • Public officials, especially those who hold the purse strings
Who are the people at each ring?

Do we have influence over them?

How do we get these people to influence the decision maker?
STRAategic Escalation

TURNING UP THE HEAT ON DECISION MAKERS
• An issue campaign is a **long-term proposition**.
• One-off or defensive actions are not enough.
• We want to build **escalating pressure** on the target over time with **direct actions** to make them uncomfortable with their decisions.
WHAT IS A “TACTIC”?  

• A tactic is an action we mobilize our members to do that puts pressure on the decision maker.
• Tactics are varied, and your choice of tactics depends on the campaign.
• These are often the “asks” in our organizing conversations.
## Tactics and Escalation

### Level 1
- Ask
- Conversation
- Persuasion
- Flattery
- Self interest
- Offer of support
- Appeal to community
- Visibility
- Education
- Information/data
- Threat of escalation
- Soft coercion

### Level 2
- Costs/consequences
- Shame/embarrassment
- Liability
- Mild disruption
- Performance/art
- Legal strategy
- Potential revenue impact
- Public perception
- Press
- Coalition pressure
- Political pressure
- Withdrawal from process

### Level 3
- Revenue impact
- Withdrawing labor
- Employment fears (for decision maker)

*Intensity*
WHY START SMALL?

• Often all we have **capacity for** at the beginning
• Demonstrates **reasonability** ("we tried asking!")
• Accustoms members to low-risk **direct action**
• Gives us opportunity to consistently **assess our progress**
• Decision maker knows **more is coming**
Which Tactics Should We Use?

Some considerations for choosing tactics:

1. Is the tactic relevant to the issue?
2. Will the tactic put pressure on the decision maker?
3. Will the tactic bring in more faculty than it alienates?
4. Does it leverage our numbers?
5. Can we measure the tactic’s success?
6. Will it be FUN?
NOTES ON ESCALATION

• After each TACTIC, assess your progress and capacity:
  • Are there more faculty involved than before?
  • Did we reach our measurable goals?
  • Is the decision maker moving?

• Each escalation should involve *more* faculty, thereby putting *more* pressure on the TARGET.

• Don’t bite off more than you can chew!
AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

• Whether you Win, Lose, or Half-Win, always think ahead to the next steps . . .

• **Did you grow your membership?** Begin holding regular meetings to keep them involved.
• **Do you have more activists?** Keep them busy through coordinated 1:1 conversations.
• **Don’t know what to do next?** Activists should recruit new members and use conversations to identify future organizing issues.
• Keep a “chapter victory” sheet and **publicize your success!**
• **MAINTAIN MOMENTUM!**
1. Identify a **widely and deeply felt problem** among faculty.
2. Determine a **specific solution** to that problem that you can win, this is your **ISSUE**.
3. Identify who on your campus **can give you that solution**, this person is the campaign’s **TARGET**.
4. Think about ways you can **leverage your MEMBERS and ALLIES** to pressure the **TARGET**.
5. Create an **ORGANIZING PLAN** that maps out your **timeline**.
6. Determine which **TACTICS** you will use and when; establish **measurable goals** for each **TACTIC**.
7. After each **TACTIC**, assess your progress.
8. **WIN!**